Salisbury University
Nabb Research Center
Since 1982
for Delmarva History and Culture
We're History...Without You!

Shoreline

Vol. 15, Issue 4, April 2008

The Almanac

by Kristen Manion and Natasha Jones

Most modern Americans are familiar with the *Old Farmer's Almanac*, a periodical that can be bought in many supermarkets and drug stores, but they may not know that almanacs have existed in one form or another since the first century of the Common Era. They were originally put together to chart astronomical data, but later adaptations included practical information of value to a variety of audiences. By the 17th century, weather predictions, recipes, health remedies and currency conversion charts began to appear in almanacs. A century later, almanacs frequently featured articles intended to provide entertainment, such as a list of meanings attributed to certain plants, puzzles, poems and humorous anecdotes.

Early 19th-century American almanacs, following the precedent set by Benjamin Franklin's best-selling *Poor Richard's Almanack*, are particularly noted for their use of comic materials. For example, this humorous anecdote is from an 1820 almanac in the Nabb Research Center's collections:

> A scholar, a bald man, and a barber, traveling together, agreed to watch four hours in the night, for the sake of security: the barber's lot came first, who shaved the scholar's head while he was asleep, and waked him when his turn came. The scholar, scratching his head, and feeling it bald, exclaimed, "You wretch of a barber, you have waked the bald man instead of me."

By the end of the 19th century, special interest almanacs flourished in America, distributed to the constituents of various religious, political and business groups. Almanacs were also used as advertising vehicles, with the Nabb Research Center's *Telephone Almanac* (1936, 1938) representing an example of this type of special interest almanac. The *Telephone Almanac* was printed by the American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T) Company and offered as a gift to Bell System telephone subscribers. These publications contained the standard features associated with almanacs, but the majority of content was concerned with the history and promotion of the telephone and AT&T.

Historic almanacs are valuable sources of information about society and popular culture, as well as past astronomical movements. Along with being important resources for historical research, they are also delightful sources of entertainment. But do not take our word for it. Several 19th- and early 20th-century almanacs are available at the Nabb Research Center—come visit us to see for yourself!

Digitizing Delmarva's Heritage and Traditions

Public Access Channel (PAC) 14 and more than a dozen local historical organizations, including the Nabb Research Center, are please to announce the launching of the "Digitizing Delmarva's Heritage and Traditions" initiative. The mission of this project is to capture Delmarva's heritage and traditions in an archive of digitally recorded material that will be viewable through public access television, the Internet and future technologies.

You can be a part of this effort to preserve, protect and promote the rich social, cultural and historical legacy of Delmarva by making a donation, contributing your own video material or submitting the name of a person, place or topic to include in the project. For more information about the project, please visit www.delmarvaheritageandtraditions.org.

Have You Seen...?

The Nabb Research Center is pleased to announce the unveiling of its new Web site. The site represents the merging of DelmarvaSettlers.org, DelmarvaHistory.org and the previous Center site. It contains a variety of materials and resources to assist academic and avocational researchers, including transcribed primary sources, maps, articles, databases, biographical profiles, image collections, finding aids, research tools and a gateway for locating materials in the Nabb Research Center's physical collections.

This "virtual facility" has special features designed to serve the needs of Salisbury University history students, such as tutorials, project ideas and access to academic information portals. Yet this content-rich site serves a global audience with an ever-growing collection of information and resources useful to the study of Delmarva's rich history and culture. Visit it at http://nabbhistory.salisbury.edu/.

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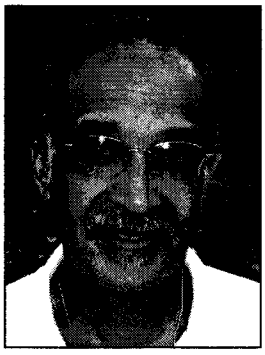
The Nabb Research Center will be closing at 2 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2008 for an administrative event. Thank you!

"We're History...Without You"

Upcoming Events:

Tuesday, April 15, 2008
Washburn Distinguished Lecture

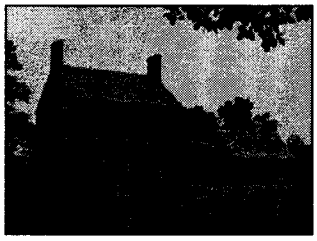


Dr. Richard J. Blackett

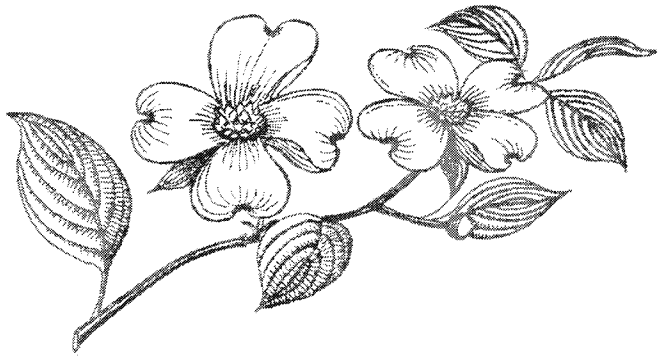
The Nabb Research Center welcomes Dr. Richard J. Blackett of Vanderbilt University to deliver this year's Washburn Distinguished Lecture in American History. Blackett is an historian of the abolitionist movement in the U.S. and the author of several African-American history books. The lecture, "Taking Leave: Fugitive Slaves and the Politics of Slavery, 1850-1860" is 7 p.m. in the Wicomico Room of the Guerrieri University Center on the main campus of Salisbury University and is open and free to the public. For information, call 410-543-6312.

Saturday, April 26, 2008
Eastern Shore House and Garden Tour
From 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., the Eastern Shore's long history and natural beauty is on display at six Northampton County homes of the 18th through the 21st centuries, all hidden treasures within a whisper or a shout of the coastline. Among the homes featured in the tour is Grapeland, the site of the Nabb Research Center's Saturday, May 3, Garden Party benefit. Call 757-678-7889 or visit www.esgardentour.com for more information.

Saturday, May 3, 2008
Garden Party at Grapeland



Grapeland, Exmore, VA

From 4:30-7:30 p.m., the Nabb Research Center Board of Directors and Mrs. K. Ray Johnson Jr. welcome guests to a benefit Garden Party at Grapeland in Exmore, VA. Grapeland is an 1825 Virginia Historic Landmark that belongs to an elite group of preserved Eastern Shore Federal Period houses. It is fully restored with Flemish bond brickwork, stately interiors, remarkable antiques and several garden areas that offer scenic views of Occohannock Creek. For information about this event, call 410-543-6312.

Spring 2008
Ongoing Exhibit: "Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: The Story of Assateague Village, VA"